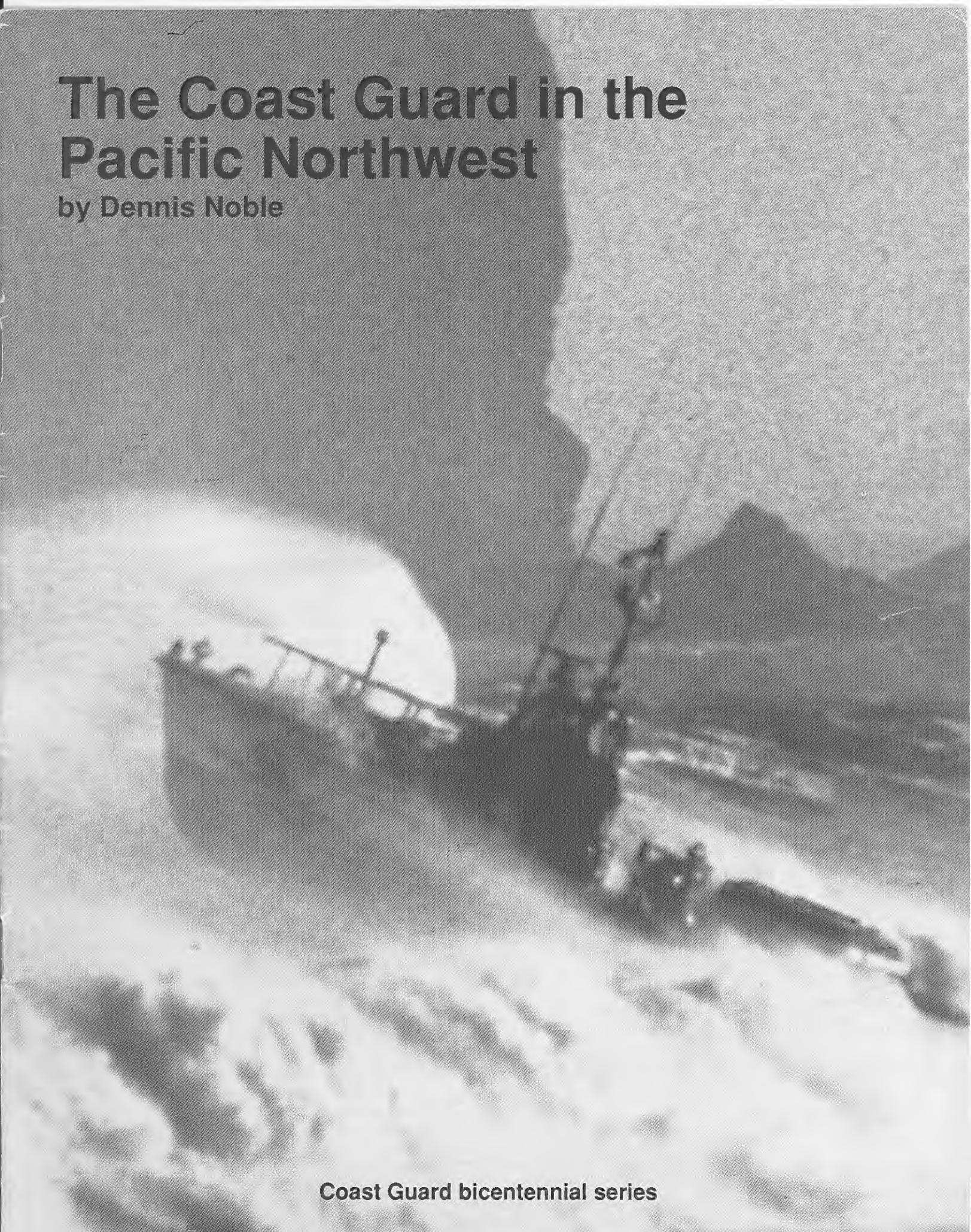
The Coast Guard in the Pacific Northwest

by Dennis Noble



Coast Guard bicentennial series

The Coast Guard in the Pacific Northwest

The establishment of the U.S. Coast Guard in the states of Washington and Oregon is tied to the increase in maritime trade during the western expansion of America. Prior to 1846, the area encompassing the present day Pacific Northwest states was controlled by Great Britain and Spain. Spain eventually gave up her claim and later, due to pressure from the United States, Great Britain also ceded her land in the region. When the Oregon Territory was created, in 1849, the region was thinly populated. For example, there were approximately 304 Americans living north of the Columbia River. Then gold was discovered in California and the resulting large wave of emigrants caused a demand for lumber to build new homes and in mining operations. Large stands of timber growing almost to water's edge made the Pacific Northwest a logical location to obtain and ship the needed raw material. Then as some gold seekers became disillusioned they began to drift northward to see if a change could improve their lot. Many of these people settled near water and the sea became an important communication link for the small settlements. For instance, in 1853, when the Washington Territory was formed, there were 3,965 inhabitants, about half of whom lived around Puget Sound. Thus, by the 1850s, the Pacific Northwest had a brisk seagoing trade.

With the establishment of a new territory and a growing maritime business, there also developed a need for the government to collect customs revenue. The first customs activities were centered at Astoria, Oregon, and then, in 1851, the Puget Sound Collection District was established in Olympia, Washington. The office was moved two years later to Port Townsend, Washington, then the largest port on the Sound. The Collector of Customs not only took in revenue, he documented vessels, administered marine hospitals, supervised lighthouses, and even undertook a little steamboat inspection.

The major problem facing the new Collector of Customs in the region was smuggling. The large amount of coves, inlets, and rivers, plus British territory nearby, made Puget Sound a smuggler's dream. The loss of revenue to the United States was put forth as the main reason for sending a revenue cutter to the Pacific Northwest. In addition, it was reasoned, a cutter would help ships in distress and would make an appropriate vessel for government officials to make

Lightship No. 88 drydocked in 1917.

their rounds. The Treasury Department apparently felt these were valid arguments for it dispatched the cutter *Jefferson Davis*, which sailed into Puget Sound on September 28, 1854. The cutter marks the first unit of the U. S. Coast Guard to be stationed in the states of Washington and Oregon.

The *Jefferson Davis* was a topsail schooner, built by J. M. Hood at Sommerset, Massachusetts, in 1852-1853 for $9,000. She was 94 feet, 9 inches in length, 23 feet in breadth, 8 feet 11 1/2 inches in depth, and with a tonnage of 176 1/95. Captain William C. Pease, the youngest Captain in the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, commanded a crew made up of three officers and at least thirty-two men. The U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, which Pease served in was founded, in 1790, by Alexander Hamiliton, the first Secretary of the Treasury, to prevent smuggling and the loss of revenue to the new nation. The Service operated under the Treasury Department and is one of the predecessors of the modern day U.S. Coast Guard.

The *Jefferson Davis* proved her worth. Very shortly after her arrival, Captain Pease and his command were caught up in the unrest between the Native Americans and whites of the region. The cutter found herself being employed as a troop transport, a platform for gunfire missions, and at one point Pease sent Third Lieutenant J. H. Harrison ashore to help command an infantry unit in combat. In the dispute over the San Juan Islands--known as the "Pig War" — the *Jefferson Davis* and the cutter *Joseph Lane*, from Astoria, helped in delivering dispatches. In addition to these combat duties, the small cutter helped mariners in distress. In the days before the telegraph, it was almost impossible to tell when a ship was definitely lost. In the case of sailing vessels, a ship could be overdue without being in trouble. The cutter, therefore, responded to many false alarms. For example, on December 6, 1854, the *Jefferson Davis* proceeded to search for the schooner *L. P. Foster*, whose owner feared she had been driven aground on Vancouver Island. The cutter searched for many days and weathered a strong westerly gale off the west coast of Vancouver Island, only to find that the missing schooner wasn't lost in the first place.

When the *Jefferson Davis* sailed into Puget Sound, she marked the first step in the federal government's role in assisting mariners of the region. If trade was to increase in the Pacific Northwest, however, a system of aids to navigation would be needed to help prevent shipwrecks. The northwest coast of the United States is noted for its rocky headlands, large amounts of precipitation, fog, and strong winds — the traditional enemies of sailors. In 1848, there was not a single lighthouse along the 1,300 miles of rugged coastline stretching from Puget Sound to the California-Mexico border. The Act that created the Oregon Territory did call for lighthouses at Cape Disappointment and New Dungeness, both in the present state of Washington, and the establishment of buoys in the Columbia River and Astoria harbor. Before the lighthouses could be built, however, the government decided to send the Coast Survey to check the sites to see if, indeed, the locations were suitable for lights.

The Coast Survey began their work in 1849 and sent back their recommendations. The report stated there should be a total of 16 lights, including Cape Disappointment and New Dungeness. Washington, the Survey felt, should have additional structures at Smith Island, Cape Flattery, and Willapa, later Shoalwater Bay. In Oregon, a light was considered necessary at the mouth of the Umpqua River. Between the years 1852 and 1858, all of the recommended lighthouses were erected and manned by the U.S. Lighthouse Service, another predecessor agency of the U.S. Coast Guard.

All of the first lighthouses in Washington and Oregon were of a single design: a Cape Cod dwelling with the tower rising through the center of the house. The design was by Amni B. Young, an architect employed by the Treasury Department.

The crew of the cutter *Snohomish* pose for a photograph in 1923. Although involved in the war on smugglers, *Snohomish* served primarily as a rescue tug, assisting ships in distress in the straits of San Juan de Fuca. Photo courtesy of the Coast Guard Museum of the Pacific Northwest.

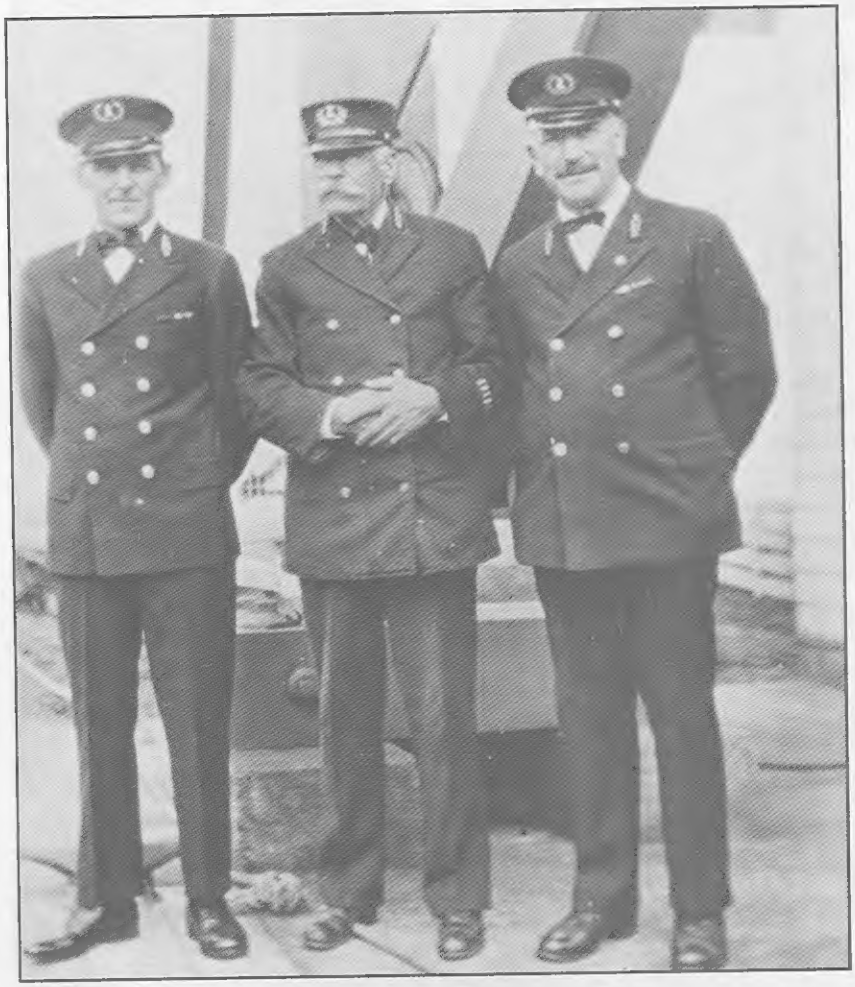
Many of the lighthouses along the coasts of Washington and Oregon posed unusual problems. The site chosen for the light at Cape Flattery is a good example. The structure would be situated on high rocky Tatoosh Island. The terrain, however, was not the main difficulty. The island was the traditional summer location for the Haidas and the Nootka tribes of Canada to fish and hunt whales. The whiteman's incursion onto the island was looked upon with disfavor. To add fuel to an already inflammatory situation, a smallpox epidemic broke out, killing at least 500 in the local Makaw village. The Native Americans laid the blame for the plague at the doorstep of the white man.

The lighthouse construction party arrived at Tatoosh Island with a tense situation on their hands. Before any work began on the light, the men built a blockhouse for protection against an expected attack. The feared encounter never materialized and, in December 1857, the light was placed in commission. Even after the station was completed, friction with the Native Americans continued. The combination of friction, low pay, bad weather (it rains an average of 215 days a year at the island), and lengthy tours of duty made it difficult to retain keepers. Once, all four keepers resigned at the same time. Enough men were eventually found who were willing to endure the isolation and loneliness. John M. Cowen, for example, arrived at Tatoosh on May 5, 1900, and remained there for thirty-two years and six months. To appreciate the difficulties of living on the island, Mrs. Cowen related that a "70 mile (an hour) gale wrecked chimneys and roofs, and blew Mr. Cowen end over end for 300 feet. Only by clinging to the grass and crawling on his hands and knees was he able to avoid being blown from the island into the sea..."

To the east of Tatoosh Island, within the Straits of Juan de Fuca, another early lighthouse has an unusual history. The New Dungeness Lighthouse was one of the original lights mentioned when the Oregon Territory was formed. The light sits on Dungeness Spit, a narrow finger of sand jutting out into the Straits. The Straits are noted for fog, drizzle, and strong winds. Thus, the lighthouse was an important aid to navigation as shipping increased in the Puget Sound region. New Dungeness Light was first displayed on December 14, 1857. The tower was masonry, painted half black and half white, thereby also making it a daymarker. The markings, as seen from the Straits, causes "an illusion to the human eye (that) frequently (seems to) raise the tower to five times its actual size and then suddenly change(s) it to a low, black line close to the ground." The lighthouse, in 1871, was once isolated when the actions of the sea caused a fifty-foot gap to appear in the spit. The same seas, however, also quickly filled in the gap. Probably the most unusual aspect of the light was the fact that, unwittingly, it was constructed on the site of a battleground where local Native Americans fought rival tribes. The unusual aspect is that, while many battles took place at the site, whites were never involved. "The government...concerned for the safety of the keepers...ordered the lighthouse equipped with heavy green shutters for protection in case of an...attack." Eventually, the battles became so common place and the dangers so nonexistent to the inhabitants of the light, the keepers "unconcernedly pulled the shutters closed and went about their duties."

To the south, one of the most difficult of all lighthouses on the West Coast to establish was built at Tillamook Rock, Oregon. This light marks dangerous offshore rocks. Tillamook Rock is a rough, crag-like rock where the sea dashes wildly against it. Only one side of the rock even presented a suitable location to place a light. It took several weeks of waiting out rough weather to land just one man, armed with nothing but a tape measure, to provide the measurements from which plans were drawn. Quarrymen were eventually landed to level a site. The men working on the construction labored from October 1879 to January 2, 1881,

Right: A chief petty officer and an enlisted man pose by a cargo of seized illegal spirits during Prohibition somewhere in the Pacific Northwest. • *Left center:* A crew of a Life-Saving Station takes time out for a photograph. The man seated at center is believed to be Albert Stream, awarded a Gold Life Saving Medal for his assistance to the British ship Lammerlaw in 1882. • *Lower left:* During World War II, Coast Guard beach patrols guarded our shores against infiltration of sabatours. Photos courtesy of the Coast Guard Museum of the Pacific Northwest.



Left: John M. Cowan, center, began service at the isolated Cape Flattery Lighthouse on May 5, 1900. He held the position of lightkeeper for an incredible 32 years and six months. Courtesy, The Museum, Clallam County (Washington Historical Society). • *Below:* Crew of the Willapa Bay U.S. Life-Saving-Service Station practice with the breeches buoy equipment. This rescue device allowed a strong line to be stretched between the shore and a ship wreck near the beach. Once the line was established, those in distress could be pulled to safety. In this practice, the lifesavers are aiming at a drill pole in the left of the photograph.

The building materials for the Heceta Head Lighthouse had to be landed from the tender and muscled up the cliff to the construction site. The photograph shows the high headlands typical of the topography of the Pacific Northwest.

under the most severe conditions imaginable. The seas made landing dangerous, with wind and seas threatening to wash the workers off the rock once they managed to get aboard. A large boom was finally installed that helped in landing men and supplies.

Tillamook Rock, once placed into commission, provided difficulties for those that served at the station. The force of the sea caused incidents that strain credulity. Green water has been reported topping the light's lantern room, some 133 feet above the sea. In December 1886, a half ton mass of concrete was sheared off and flung some ninety feet above normal water. In 1894, thirteen panes in the lantern room were completely shattered and rocks, seaweed, and fish were flung into the room. The iron roof received so many holes that in 1898 it had to be replaced with thick, flat reinforced concrete.

It took a special person to stay on Tillamook Rock. One lighthouse keeper, as a reward for long and faithful service at the isolated station, was selected to help care for the U.S. Lighthouse Service's exhibit at the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco in 1898. After a week amongst the crowds, the keeper pleaded to return to his rock. "No more of them noisy wise cracking crowds for me, I'll live here until I die," the keeper reported upon his return to Oregon. Robert Gerloff actually hated to go ashore and it was rumored that he had spent a five year stretch on the

rock without relief. When it came time for his retirement, Gerloff pleaded with the Service to allow him to stay aboard Tillamook Rock as a paying guest, but his request was denied and the old keeper left the light for the last time.

The most isolated and dangerous duty in the Lighthouse Service was aboard lightships. These small, special ships guarded areas where it was impossible to build a light structure. The obvious danger in this type of duty is that the vessel must remain on station no matter how fierce the gale. Another real danger is the possibility of being rammed by another ship attempting to feel its way through thick weather. The *Columbia River* Lightship, for example, was struck by the *William E. Channing* in January 1950. The lightship on this station had been involved in collisions on two previous occasions.

The first lightship on the West Coast was the *Columbia River* Number 50. The ship was built by the Union Iron Works of San Francisco and began her service in 1892. The next lightship assigned to the Pacific Northwest took station at Umatilla Reef, about halfway down the coast of Washington, in 1898. The third, and last, lightship location in the region was at Swiftsure. The light vessel took station near the entrance to the Straits of Juan de Fuca in 1909.

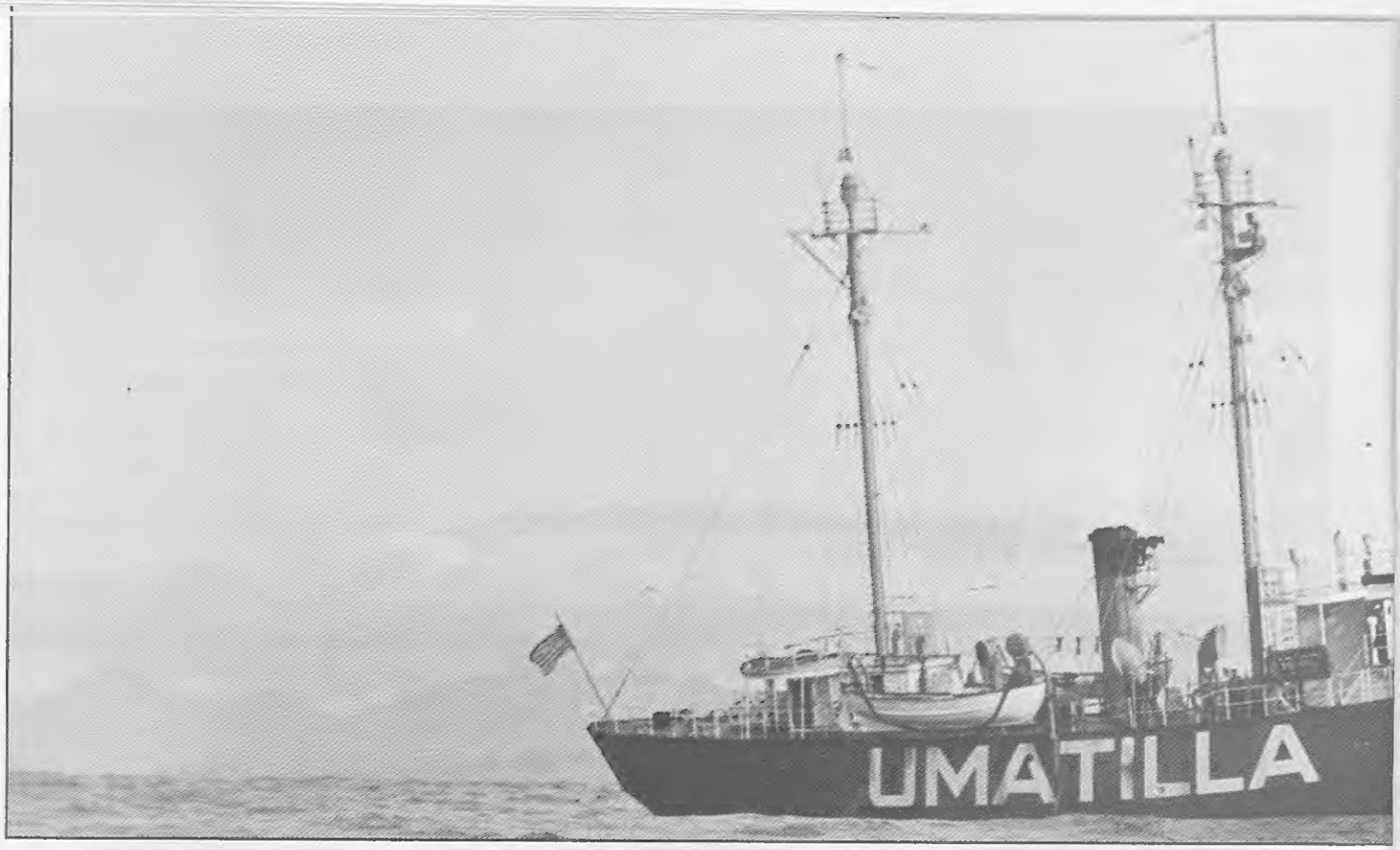
The U.S. Lighthouse Service also operated a fleet of ships known as lighthouse tenders. The tenders provided the means to bring supplies and needed work parties to the scattered and isolated lighthouses. The rocky nature of lighthouse locations made this duty very hazardous. One author noted that the fleet of tenders consisted "of vessels whose duty it is to go where no other vessels are allowed to go, and who, through storm, darkness and sunshine, do their work..." At first, all tenders were fitted with sails. The first steam powered vessel of the Service assigned to the West Coast was built in Philadelphia, in 1857. The 140 foot *Shubrick* sailed for many years on the waters of Puget Sound. She helped in the construction of the first lighthouses in the state of Washington, became enmeshed in the unrest with the Native Americans and whites of the region, and helped ships in distress. She also had a brief stint in the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service from 1861 to 1867. The old tender served for some 28 years before being sold for scrap in 1885.

The Lighthouse Service along the West Coast continued to grow over the years. As new ports gained importance, additional lights were placed into commission. By 1900, for instance, there were 17 lighthouses located in Washington and Oregon.

The purchase of Alaska in 1868 caused an increase in the Revenue Cutter Service's presence in the Puget Sound region. The main port of operations for the cutters sailing to protect the United States' revenue interests in the territory was Port Townsend, Washington. Some of the most famous cutters of the Service — the *Bear*, the *Corwin*, and *Wolcott* — sailed to the Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean from this port. After the turn of the 20th Century, however, the port of Seattle began to become more important for all shipping in the region.

The next predecessor agency of the modern day U.S.

Tillamook Lighthouse was one of the most difficult lights to construct in the United States. Green water has topped the light, some 133 feet above the sea. Tillamook guards the southern entrance to the Columbia River.



Coast Guard to be established in Washington and Oregon was the Steamboat Inspection Service. The large growth of steam powered ships and the resultant explosions of faulty boilers, with great loss of life, caused the passage of the first laws to regulate passenger carrying steam vessels in 1838.

In the early years of steamboat development, inland waterways were better suited to the new vessels than ocean navigation. The inland waters of Washington and Oregon were ideally suited to this new type of transportation. It was not until 1863, however, that Captain J. M. Crouch, as Inspector of Hulls, and John Gates, Boiler Inspector, were established at Portland, Ore. In their first year of operations, they inspected 24 steam vessels and licensed fifty pilots and thirty-eight engineers. As work increased, another office was established in Seattle in 1871. By 1899, the Portland District was inspecting 151 vessels totaling 42,944 tons and issuing 188 licenses.

The last of the four predecessor agencies that would eventually make up the U.S. Coast Guard — the U.S. Life-Saving Service — did not begin duty in the Pacific Northwest until 1877, even though it can trace its federal origins to 1848. The primary duty of this organization was the assistance to mariners in distress close to the beach by shore based small boats. One has only to look at wreck charts of the region to understand the need to establish rescue stations. Regional marine writer Jim Gibbs, for example, has listed at least 204 wrecks around the entrance to the Straits of Juan de Fuca. Don Marshall lists 124 known wrecks between Cape Falcon and Cape Disappointment on the Washington-Oregon coasts.

The first station of the U.S. Life Saving-Service in the Pacific Northwest was established at Shoalwater, later Willapa Bay, in 1877, with Cape Disappointment and Neah Bay, Washington, stations placed into commission in 1878. (Neah Bay station was first built on Waddah Island). Most stations of the Service, until well after the beginning of the 20th Century, were small, usually consisting of no more than seven men. The crewmen, called surfmen, spent long hours practicing with their rescue equipment and performing beach patrols and lookout duties. When assistance was needed, it was oars and human muscles against the sea.

The lifesavers more than earned their small monthly wages. In 1881, for example, Keeper Alfred T. Harris, of the Cape Disappointment Station, rescued 19 men from a wrecked ship. Three years later, with a volunteer crew, Harris helped in the rescue of 175 passengers from the *Queen of the Pacific*. The British bark, *Lammerlaw*, grounded near Shoalwater Bay at five in the morning on October 30, 1882, during a driving storm. The rescue of its crew is described in the pages of the Annual Report of the U.S. Life-Saving Service:

The start was...made for the wreck, the danger and difficulty increasing at every boat's length...In tempestuous weather...the great field of shallow waters literally raged, and the wreck struck out aslant, the center an abatis of flying chutes and cataracts...Amidst this turmoil the boat inched up to the wreck, the men keeping a terrible grip on the oars and straining for their hold against the sea. Once the boat half-filled...and an oar snapped...but finally, by hazardous maneuvers...the crew of the *Lammerlaw* was rescued. For his efforts, Albert T. Stream, who was in charge of the rescue, received the Gold Life-Saving Medal, the highest award bestowed by the Service, and a medal from the British government.

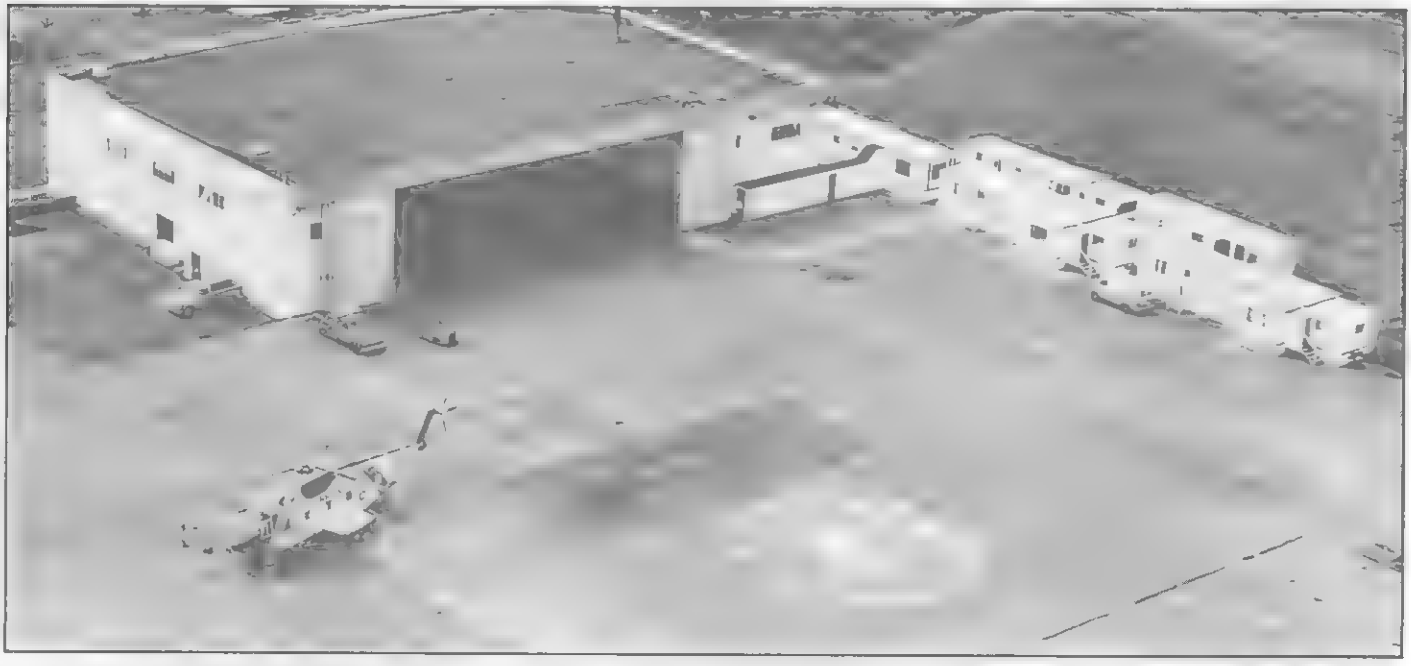
With the establishment of the U.S. Life-Saving Service in the Washington-Oregon region, all the predecessor agencies of the modern day U.S. Coast Guard were now effectively serving the maritime community of the Pacific Northwest. The gradual adding of stations and the shifting of the various cutters within the area continued but, in general, the status

Left: Lightship No. 513 serving on Umatilla reef in 1954. She served here from1939 — 1959, with a brief interuption during World War II. • *Below:* U.S. Coast Guard Base, Port Townsend, Wash., is crowded with small craft during the Rum War. The larger units are 75-footers, or "Six Bitters". The Coast Guard constructed 203 of these boats to battle smuggling. This was the largest number of craft of a single type built for the Service until this time. Courtesy, Coast Guard Museum of the Pacific Northwest.

quo was continued until 1915 when, in an effort to streamline government operations, a major change came about. On January 15, 1915, the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service and the U.S. Life-Saving Service were amalgamated to form the U.S. Coast Guard.

The first major task of the new Service came in 1920, with the passage of the Vostead Act, the experiment to outlaw liquor in the United States. For the next 14 years the U.S. Coast Guard waged a war against the smugglers of illegal spirits. While the volume of smuggling in Washington and Oregon never reached the proportions of that along the eastern seaboard, there was enough to keep Coast Guardsmen busy.

The cutter *Arcata*, under the command of Boatswain L.A. Lonsdale's "skillful and patient endeavor,...was able to make a good number of seizures (of illegal), many of them involving...craft (of higher speeds)." In June 1924, for example, *Arcata* was pursuing a speedboat and placed a shot across



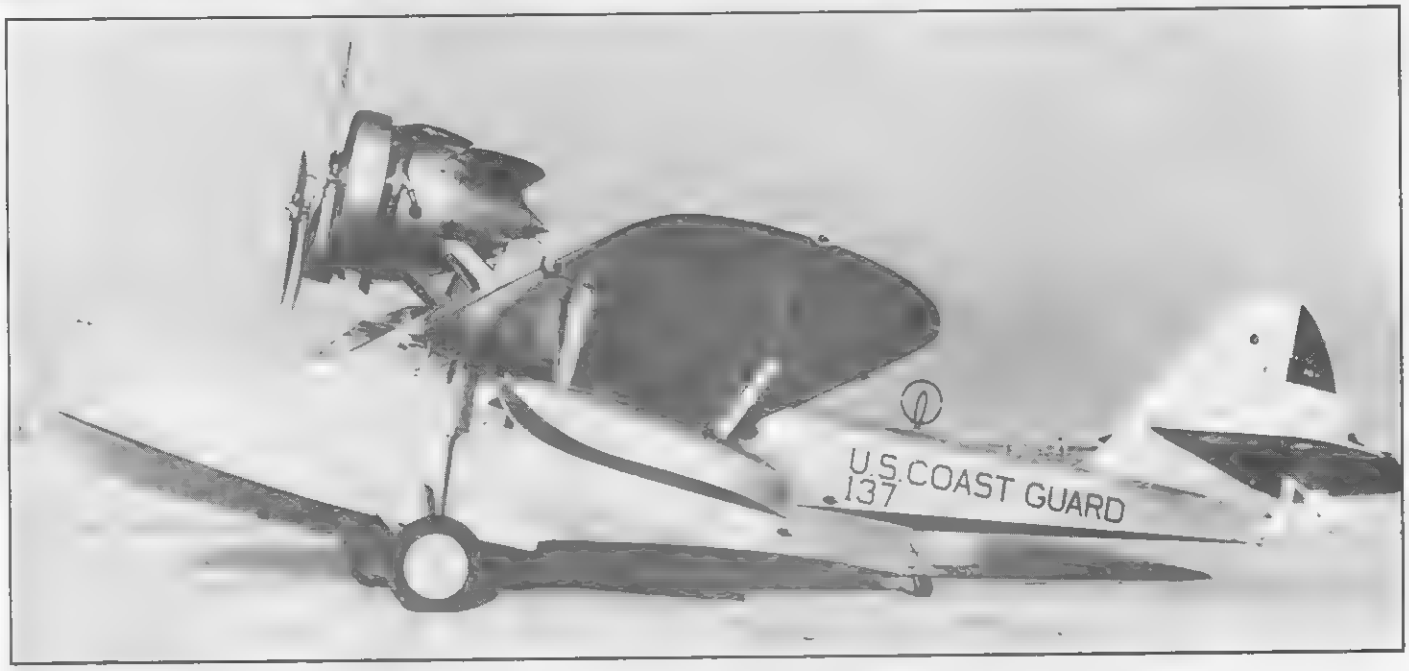
her bows. The rum runner returned fire with small arms. The cutter then increased her rate of return fire and the smuggler's boat exploded, apparently hit in her fuel tank. The boat was beached and it was found to contain contraband liquor, plus some Chinese were found onboard who were trying to enter the United States illegally.

The repeal of Prohibition in 1934 ended the long rum war at sea. The role of the U.S. Coast Guard in the effort to keep America dry was not a popular one. As one historian has noted, the Service was unpopular with those that wished to ban liquor because they could not completely cut off the illegal flow of booze, nor was the Service popular with those that wished the country "wet," for the anti-smuggling work did cut off some of the sources of liquor. "It was a cross which the Coastguardsman had to bear, and he bore it well." Out of the long rum war, however, came an expanded Service that "remained larger and more important than it had been previously." In the same year as the repeal of Prohibition, a major new unit was established on the West Coast. On July 29, 1934, work was begun on the first U.S. Coast Guard Air Station on the West Coast. Its location at Port Angeles, Wash., was chosen for the strategic position it occupied for coastal patrol. The station's first equipment included three seventy-five foot patrol boats, four picket boats, and one amphibious aircraft.

As war clouds began to thicken in 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt made another major change to the U.S. Coast Guard. Again, citing the need for governmental efficiency, the U.S. Lighthouse Service, in existence since 1789, was taken over by the U.S. Coast Guard. Shortly after this take over, the Service began to go on a wartime footing and was greatly increased.

During World War II, the U.S. Coast Guard in the Pacific Northwest continued its traditional duties while assisting in

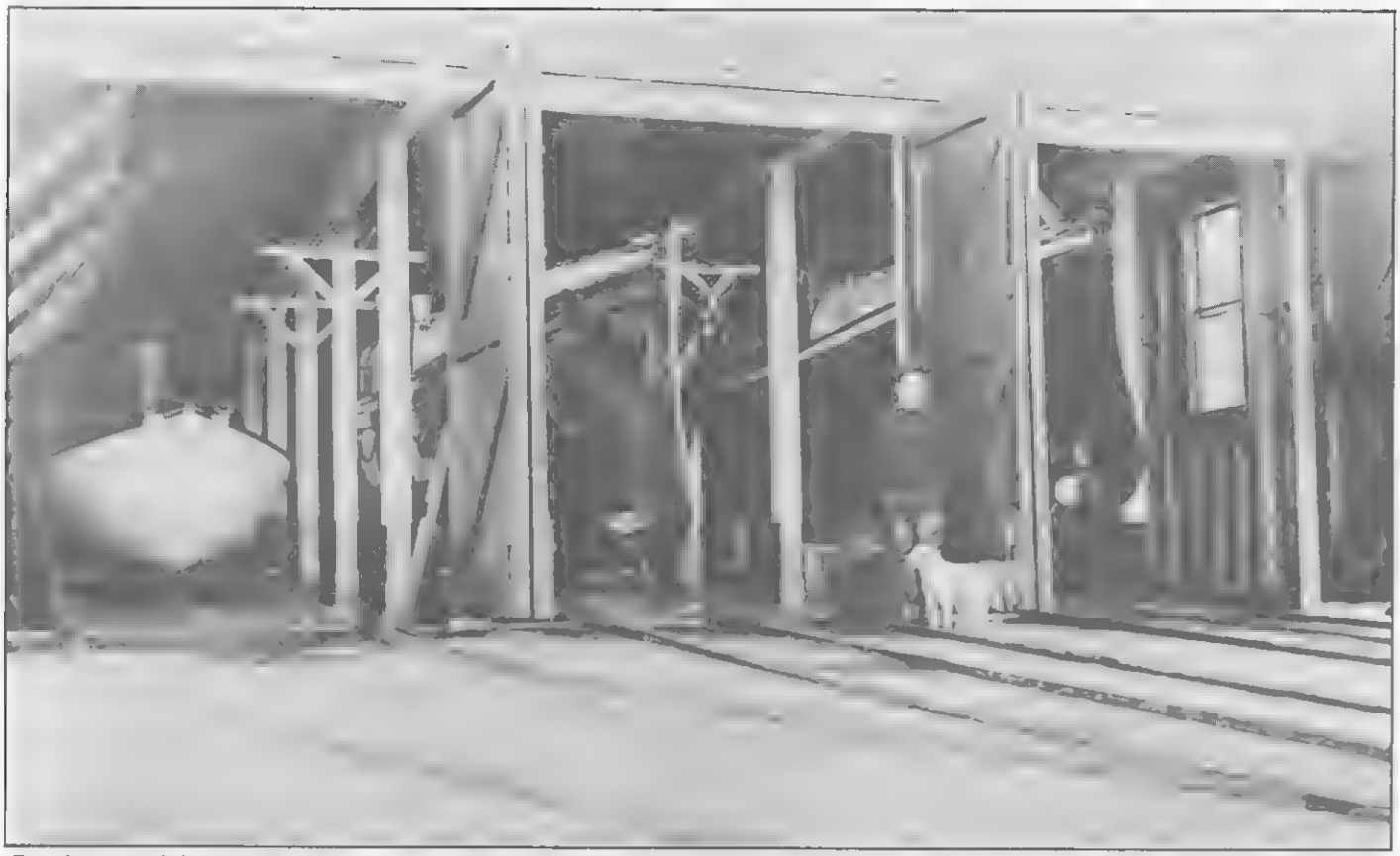
Clockwise from upper left: **Air Station Port Angeles, Wash., was the first Coast Guard Air Station on the West Coast. It was placed in commission in 1935. • The first aircraft to be assigned to the Port Angeles Air Station was a Douglas RD-4. The Coast Guard acquired 10 of these amphibians between 1934 and 1943. • Air Station Astoria, Oregon, established in 1964, was the second Coast Guard Air Station to serve the Pacific Northwest.**



the war effort. Beach patrols, now greatly augmented with dogs and horses, continued to keep a lookout for ships in distress, but now, reacting to the fear that gripped the country, the patrols kept a sharp watch for submarines and saboteurs. Air Station Port Angeles was a base for training aerial gunners and also had a practice landing strip for carrier landing training. In 1942, as a wartime measure, the former Steamboat Inspection Service, now called the U.S. Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, was transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard. The transfer was made permanent in 1946.

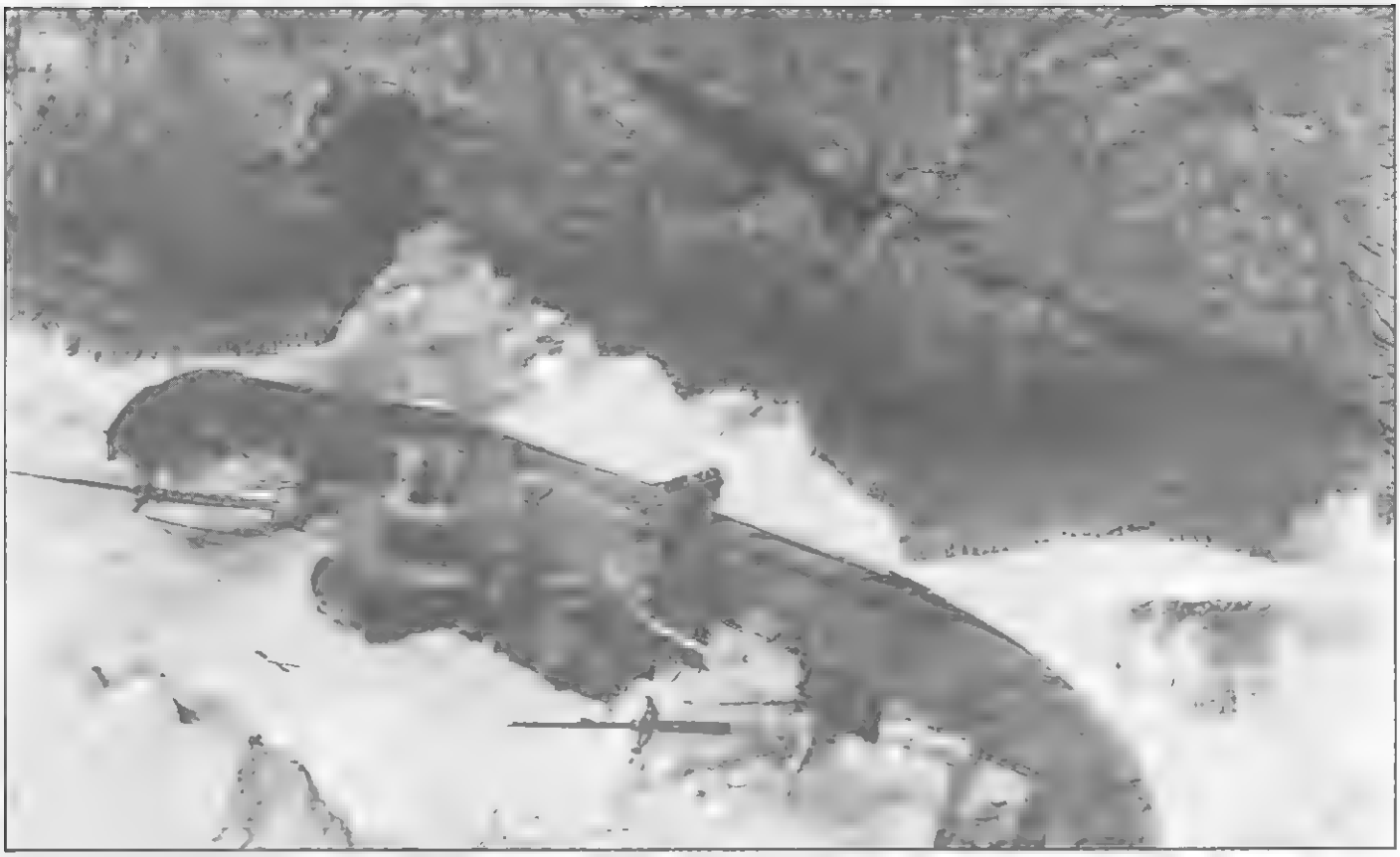
Even in the midst of a global war, the U.S. Coast Guard, now operating under the U.S. Navy, carried out its humanitarian role in the Pacific Northwest. During a severe gale on March 31, 1943, the Russian freighter *Lamut* struck near Teahwhit Head, Wash., south of Cape Flattery, and started an unique rescue. The Captain of the *Lamut* lost his position in the gale whipped rain and struck heavily against the rocks near La Push.

There were 44 men and eight women aboard the doomed vessel. The wild pounding seas drove the ship hard against the rocks and prevented other ships and small boats from approaching her. The men from the Quillayute Coast Guard Station started to hack their way through thickly wooded terrain and came out onto the rocky headlands, with the *Lamut* lying on the rocks below them. The Coast Guardsmen, now turned mountain climbers, edged their way cautiously out onto a precipitous ridge. A glance at contemporary photographs of the *Lamut* wreck site and one can feel nervous about the sailors inching their way over rain slick rocks, with heavy winds tearing at them and threatening to hurl them into the waters below. Clinging to the rocks high above the ship, the rescuers knew that if something wasn't accomplished quickly, the crewmen



Boathouse of the Neah Bay, Wash., U.S. Life-Saving Station, in 1910. Two motor lifeboats and a surfboat are visible. Note that the far lifeboat is named "*Audacious*". Courtesy, Coast Guard Museum of the Pacific Northwest.

The Neah Bay Life-Saving Service crew stands ready to launch their surf boat. This is the second site occupied by this station.



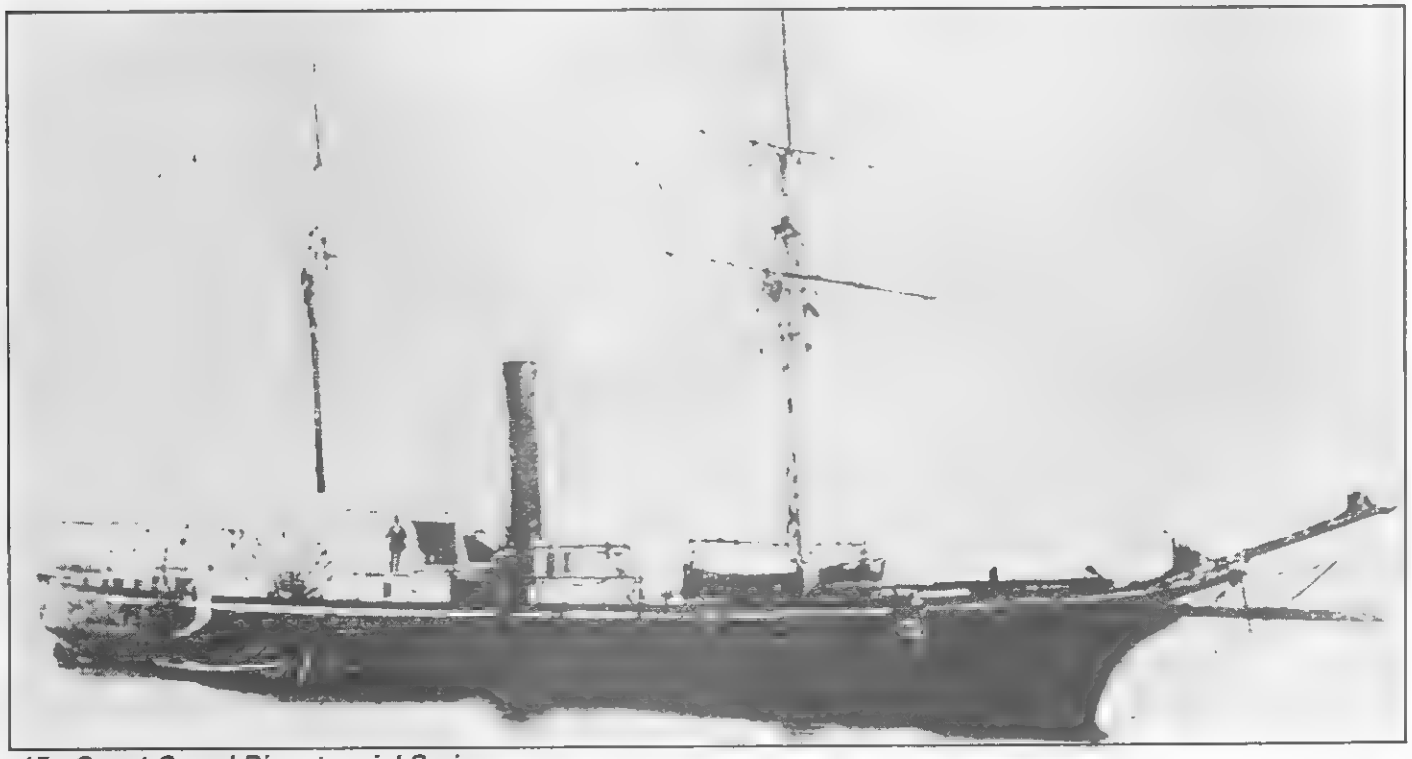
The Russian freighter *Lamut* rests between the feared jagged rocks of the Qillayute Needles south of Cape Flattery, Wash. On April 1, 1943, 54 crewmembers were saved in one of the most daring rescues in Coast Guard history. The rescuers had to use their shoe laces in order to make the messenger line long enough to reach the stranded ship.

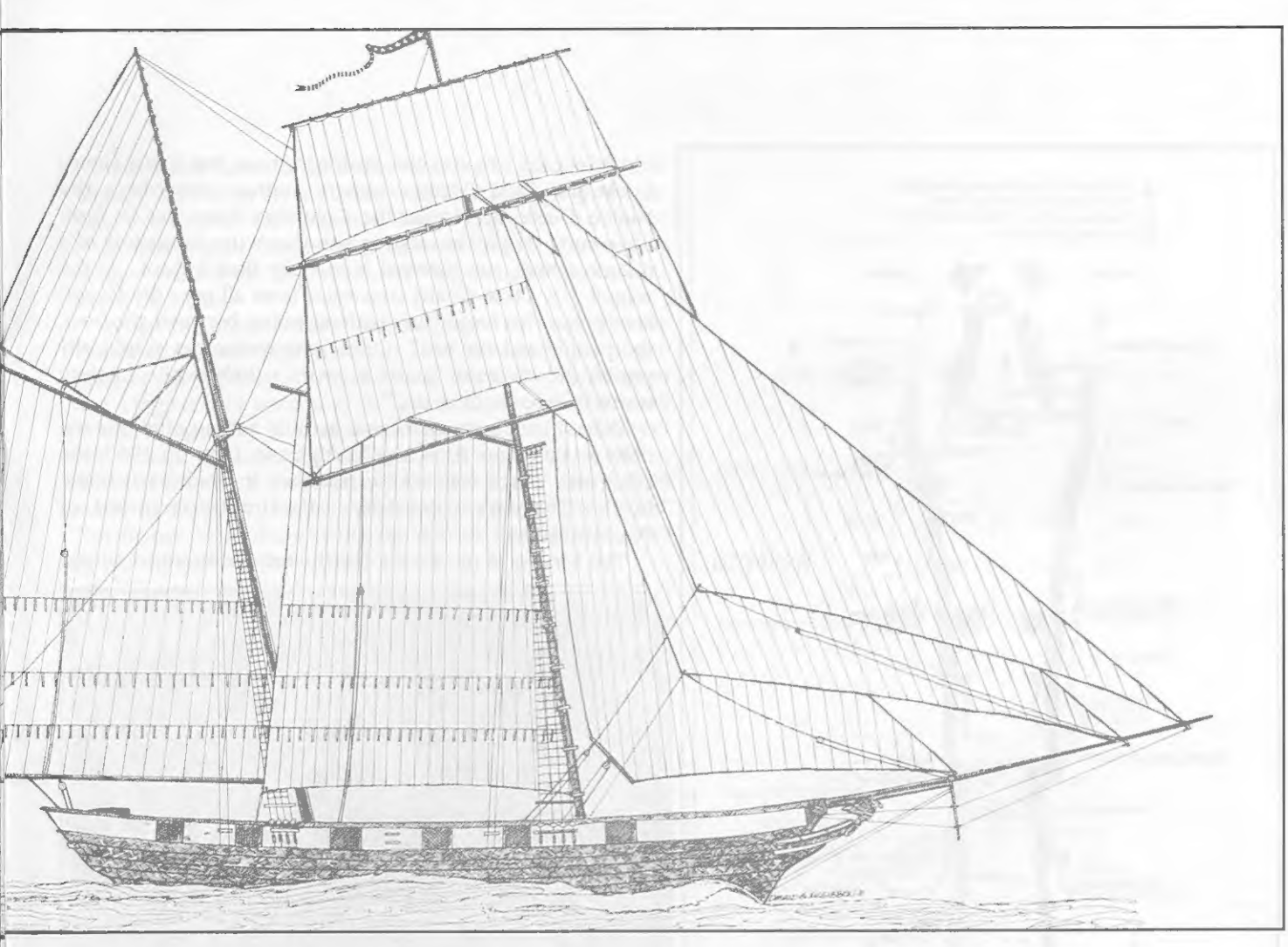
would be lost. There was, however, no rescue equipment then available that could be wrestled out onto the dangerous ridge and the rope available would not reach the *Lamut*. While the Coast Guardsmen tried to figure out how the crew could be saved, the Russians attempted to launch a lifeboat, but one woman was killed and another injured when a cable snapped. Now everything depended upon the men clinging to the rocks above the freighter.

In one of the most inspired moments in the history of maritime rescue in the Pacific Northwest, the Coast Guardsmen on the rocks above the *Lamut* hit upon the idea of how to bring the crew to safety. The men unlaced their shoes and tied the laces together, thus forming enough extra line to reach the *Lamut*. The incredulous Russian seamen grabbed the shoelaces, tied a heavier line to the makeshift messenger line, which the Coast Guardsmen then hauled up the cliff. Eventually, a heavy line was stretched from the *Lamut* and belayed to the rocks above. The crew of the *Lamut* was now compelled to work their way hand-over-hand up the hawser to the relative safety of the cliff. "Hanging between the black clouds above and the snarling, crashing breakers below, they went. One slip would have meant instant death." Later, some of the crew "admitted that fear alone impelled them onward." The inspired actions of the Coast Guardsmen prevented the sea from claiming more victims.

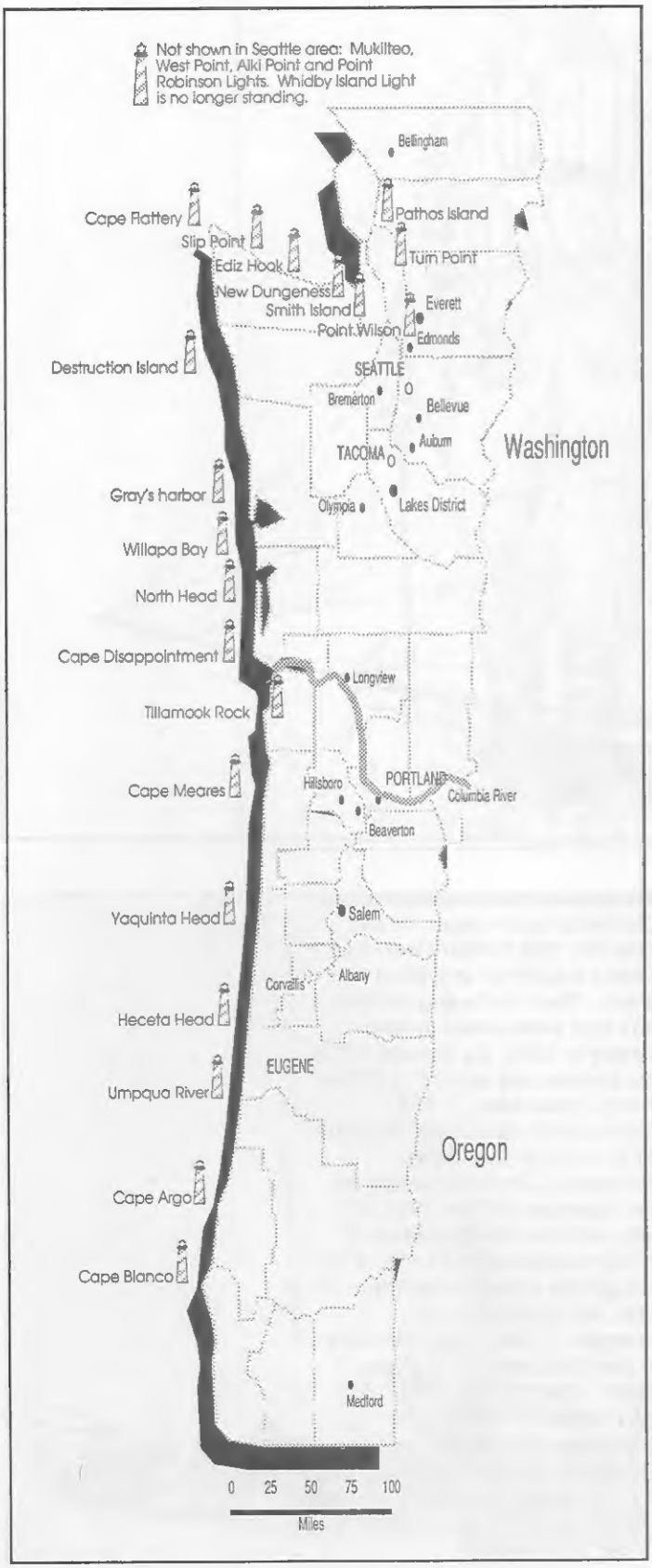
The U.S. Coast Guard in the Pacific Northwest that emerged from World War II is the Service that still operates its multi-faceted missions today. To be sure, there have been major changes. Technology, for example, has made it possible for the closing of many units. Better ship navigation has made the use of some lighthouses no longer necessary. Isolated Tillamook Rock Lighthouse, where Robert Gerloff served for so many years, was disestablished in 1957. Technology has also made it possible to automate lighthouses and the use of keepers at a light station is no longer necessary. In fact, when the U.S. Coast Guard took over the Lighthouse Service, it began immediately to explore ways to automate the many isolated stations. Tatoosh Island, where so much friction developed between the Native Americans and the Service, was automated in 1977. It is estimated that before the end of the 1980s there will be no manned lighthouses in the United States, thus ending a long era in our maritime history. Technology has also marked the end of all lightships in Washington and Oregon. Lastly, another technological advancement was the replacement of the Coast Guard's standard workhorses in lifesaving equipment. In 1961, a new 44-foot motor lifeboat was built to replace the


M.J. Burns





Clockwise from upper far left: This late 19th Century woodcut shows a surfman in typical dress. The Life-Saving service was first established in New Jersey in 1848. By the late 1870s the service was operating in the Pacific Northwest. • The *Jefferson Davis* was the first cutter to serve in the Pacific Northwest. She was named for the Secretary of War (1853-57), who later became president of the Confederacy (1861-65). Even though the cutter served through 1862, her name was not changed. • Two stout members of the *Rush* pose for a photograph. *Rush* was employed in the Pacific Northwest and Alaskan waters throughout her career. • The *Shubrick* was the first tender on the West Coast as well as the first steam powered tender in service.



old 36-footer. To test the prototype boat, the Coast Guard chose the Cape Disappointment Station area where the Pacific Ocean breaks on the Columbia River Bar to form huge surf. From this testing site came the formation of a unique school, the National Motor Life Boat School. At the school, U.S. Coast Guard coxswains from all over the United States learn "to forge (an) understanding between the boat, the people and the sea." Or, as one writer has graphically put it, the students "learn to work calmly while instinct warns they're about to die."

Other changes in the region include adding other air stations at Astoria in 1964 and North Bend, Ore. In 1967, the U.S. Coast Guard was transferred from its traditional home in the Treasury Department to the Department of Transportation.

The Service in the Pacific Northwest continues to pursue

Cape Flattery Lighthouse sits on rugged Tatoosh Island off the Washington coast. The light was automated in 1977.

its traditional duties of assistance and law enforcement. On January 18, 1986, for example, the Honduran ship, *Eagle One*, was seized near Neah Bay, Wash. *Eagle One* was found to be carrying a total of 507 pounds of illegal cocaine. The seizure marked the largest haul of illegal cocaine to date on the West Coast.

When the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service cutter *Jefferson Davis* sailed into Puget Sound in 1854, it marked the beginning of the U.S. Coast Guard's long service to Washington and Oregon that continues to this day. The various small maritime agencies that were amalgamated into the present day Service left a strong foundation of assistance to others. Today, the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard, who serve in the many units scattered throughout the Pacific Northwest, continue to carry on, and to surpass, the deeds of their illustrious predecessors.

The Neah Bay station traces its roots to the Waadah Island Life-Saving Service Station, established in 1877.